At first glance it may appear that the Denver Mountain Parks are unrelated parcels scattered across four counties. But the reality is that the individual parks comprise a cohesive system of significant lands connected by watersheds, forests, sensitive ecosystems, trails, and scenic drives. Each park has its own distinct character, but the system as a whole shares an audience, uses, geography, character, and historic integrity. These similarities offer a way of organizing the parks into four tiers, for ease in providing recommendations and for better understanding the role that each park plays in the larger system.

The four broad tiers of the Denver Mountain Parks are:

**The Stars**
Red Rocks, Lookout Mountain, Echo Lake, Summit Lake, and Winter Park

**The Hearts**
Genesee, Dedisse, Newton, and Daniels

**The Picnic Parks**
Little, Corwina/O’Fallon/Pence (along Bear Creek), Bell and Cub Creek (along those creeks), Fillius, Bergen, and Turkey Creek

**Conservation/Wilderness Parks**
The 24 undeveloped parcels, initially set aside for their resource value, often surrounded by private property with no access, and with the potential of offering some limited recreation in the future. (Listed on page 144.)

“The system is unique in that the creation of it is the first instance on record of an American city establishing a Park and camping grounds twenty to thirty miles beyond its own borders. Denver has brought her own Mountain scenery to her own doors.”

—Denver and Her Mountain Parks, circa 1918-20
4.B.1. THE STARS

Many of Colorado’s most significant landscapes are within the Denver Mountain Parks system. The uplifting sandstone ridges of Red Rocks Park, the steep world-class powder slopes of Winter Park, the resting place of Buffalo Bill, and the high mountain lakes and peaks of Mount Evans are icons of the American West, and all are part of the Denver Mountain Park system.

These iconic landscapes draw more than two million visitors to Denver and the region each year, who often travel thousands of miles to experience the Old West Hollywood style at the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave at Lookout Mountain Park or peer across the top of Red Rocks Amphitheatre for a panoramic view of Denver. The Stars are those parks within the system that attract the largest crowds, offer the most stunning experiences, suffer the greatest impacts to their natural and cultural resources, and generate the most income. The Stars are:

- Red Rocks Park
- Lookout Mountain Park with Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum
- Echo Lake Park (Mt. Evans)
- Summit Lake Park (Mt. Evans)
- Winter Park Ski Resort
Background

Just minutes from downtown Denver, colossal rock outcrops rise dramatically from the rolling high plains prairie. These tilted red sandstone formations are Red Rocks Park, the most famous of the Denver Mountain Parks. Created eons ago by the deposition of material and the upheaval of earth, Red Rocks Park is a special place of geologic, historic, cultural, and scenic value.

The park’s namesake geologic formations are ancient structures composed of sediments laid down 300 million years ago. Over time rivers and inland seas flowed over the sedimentary deposits. About 65 million years ago an immense surge pushed these ancient beds of rock upward, lifting and tilting them. Torrential streams, caused by the glacial melting and heavy rains of the Pleistocene Ice Age two to three million years ago, incised the landforms. Millions of years ago a very different kind of wildlife roamed the area – the giant dinosaurs Apatosaurus, Stegosaurus, and Triceratops. Later inhabitants included Native Americans, explorers, settlers, and miners.

Once known as the Garden of the Angels (and later, of the Titans), Red Rocks Park attracted the attention of Denver businessman John Brisben Walker early in the 20th century. Walker enhanced this tourist destination with a funicular railway and carriage roads and trails through the rock outcrops. In 1928 Denver bought this ‘Park of the Red Rocks’ and immediately began building miles of scenic roads and contemplating a huge amphitheatre. The scenic roads capitalized on the park’s natural features, providing spectacular views.
In 1931, Denver built the Indian Concession House, designed by W.R. Rosche in the Pueblo Revival style and now known as the Trading Post.

Although Red Rocks Park is relatively small at 804 acres, its interface between the great plains and the Rocky Mountain foothills creates a very diverse mix of biological communities, ranging from plains riparian to shrublands. In the spring and summer, the park’s lower elevations support grasslands with showy flowers like Indian paintbrush and penstemon. Some of these grasslands are on the Rocky Flats Alluvium, one of Colorado’s oldest land surfaces. Plains riparian vegetation dominates stream corridors and include plains and narrow leaf cottonwood, wild plum, box elder, hawthorn, and chokecherry. Juniper and ponderosa pine are interspersed with shrublands of Gambel’s oak, mountain mahogany and skunkbush.

The Park’s best known feature is the world famous Red Rocks Amphitheatre that lies in the naturally formed bowl between Creation and Ship Rocks. Composed of a sweeping upward arc of wood-edged seats and built of simple indigenous materials, Red Rocks Amphitheatre is a great work of art carefully integrated with its natural setting. Red Rocks Amphitheatre is the master work of Denver architect Burnham Hoyt. Beginning in 1936 and progressing for five years, hundreds of men from the Morrison and Genesee Camps of the Civilian Conservation Corps and local Works Progress Administration men toiled to complete this masterpiece. In 2003, a new visitor center completed Burnham Hoyt’s originally envisioned agora at the top of the historic amphitheatre.

More than one million people visit Red Rocks Park each year. The world-renowned acoustics and breathtaking setting of the Red Rocks Amphitheatre attract most of these patrons. Each year, dozens of concerts and shows offer a wide variety in entertainment and attract a broad mix of people. The new visitor center offers a gift shop, restaurant, meeting rooms, and exhibits that highlight the park’s musical history, natural history, and its development. The Trading Post, just south of the amphitheatre, is also popular and has recently become one of Colorado’s State Welcome Centers. In addition to concerts, the Amphitheatre is heavily used by geology classes, runners zig-zagging up the steps and rows of seats, photographers, international tourists, and special events by reservation.

Picnicking and hiking were once favorite activities at Red Rocks Park. The Geologic Marker site (rehabilitated in 1996) offers a wonderful overlook with a panoramic view of Denver and the eastern plains, and a small picnic site with a simple shelter. A few trails exist in the park including the Red Rocks Trail that connects with Matthews Winter Park and Dinosaur Ridge and the 1.4-mile Trading Post hiking trail that traverses the park’s spectacular rock formations and natural valleys. The historic scenic roads are a favorite route for bicyclists.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

Red Rocks Park’s iconic natural setting offers an outdoor experience that is without parallel. The spectacular rock formations and world famous Amphitheatre attract local, state-wide, national and international visitors. Most visit the Amphitheatre or the Trading Post, and a few picnic and hike. The frequency of events at the Amphitheatre at times limits the use of the remainder of the park. The success of the Amphitheatre and the new Visitor Center has required a number of improvements for ADA accessibility, and new water, sewer, and drainage infrastructure. These improvements, coupled with large numbers of people traversing the landscape during Amphitheatre
The dramatic monolithic rock formations in Red Rocks Park are prime examples of the Pennsylvanian and Permian rocks of the Fountain formation that were upturned during the most recent mountain-building event in the Rocky Mountains. Rising to the west, most of the Denver Mountain Parks are underlain by Precambrian metamorphosed sedimentary and volcanic rocks of early and middle Proterozoic age. In the valley bottoms, Quaternary deposits of alluvial sand and gravel and colluvium (sediment deposits at the bottom of slopes) have accumulated on top of the bedrock.
events, have brought in noxious weeds and created new social trails. Together, these are increasing erosion and impairing water quality.

Red Rocks Park is an irreplaceable historic and natural icon. Denver Parks is currently working with the National Park Service on nominating the park as a National Historic Landmark to recognize its national and international significance. This designation will recognize all of the park’s significant features including the scenic roads, the Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps camp, and of course, the Red Rocks Amphitheatre.

A major challenge for Red Rocks is how to respond to the demand for increased events and activities in the Amphitheatre and Park while preserving the sensitive landscape. Unlike irrigated bluegrass parks in town, the native landscape in Red Rocks and the DMP cannot survive intense use.

**Red Rocks Park Recommendations**

A. Close the social trails between the scenic roads and the Amphitheatre that are damaging the meadows, causing erosion, and generating noxious weeds.
   - Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
   - Work closely with Theatres & Arenas (T&A) to balance the needs of amphitheatre with protection of the park, i.e., protection of the landscape.

B. Work with T&A to create funding opportunities for improvements and stewardship of Red Rocks and the other DMP.
   - Consider increasing the facility use fee at events to generate additional revenue for DMP improvements.

C. Consider tapping into the Welcome Center audience for donations towards the park.

D. Work with T&A to explore special concerts or events that could be fund-raisers for the park itself.

C. Complete the National Historic Landmark Designation nomination.

D. Work with T&A to create comprehensive Event Guidelines for permitted use of the park or for Amphitheatre activities that impact the park.
E. Designate the City’s recent acquisitions of land adjacent to Red Rocks as parkland.

F. Expand Red Rocks Park’s role as a draw for visitors seeking historic and cultural experiences by expanding its appeal to a broader audience.
   - Attract heritage tourism visitors who appreciate the cultural heritage and artistic qualities of Red Rocks.
   - Offer additional exhibits on the DMP at the Visitor Center and at the Trading Post.

G. Upgrade existing infrastructure at the Trading Post according to the 1995 Red Rocks Park Master Plan.
   - Modify the vehicular circulation, parking and drop-off to improve access and to showcase the architecture of the Trading Post.
   - Rehabilitate the outdoor terrace for more consistent community use.

- Complete the rehabilitation of the native plant garden north of the Trading Post.
- Improve the aesthetics and access to the Trading Post Trail.

H. Improve Morrison Park roads and park circulation including access points, internal roads, parking areas, and stream access.
   - Improve the ingress and egress and visibility from the Town of Morrison to Morrison Park.
   - Reconfigure parking areas for aesthetics and improved use.
   - Upgrade the existing picnic areas, possibly with a new shelter, trailheads, and associated parking.
   - Work with the Town of Morrison and Jefferson County on Bear Creek improvements and trail connections.

I. Consider new uses for the Mt. Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps camp, working with the Town of Morrison. This camp is considered one of a few remaining camps in the United States with this degree of integrity and completeness.
   - Continue the program of stabilizing and restoring the CCC buildings and site.
   - Analyze the site for its best and highest use and role in heritage tourism or as a public destination.

J. Rehabilitate and provide ongoing maintenance for the popular Trading Post Hiking Trail.
   - Repair the trail surface through the ravine near the Trading Post, and provide clear access points.

K. Work with partners on the Mt. Vernon Creek Trail, Bear Creek Trail, and the connection to Dinosaur Ridge across Highway 93.

L. Support the efforts of the Friends of Red Rocks in their ongoing stewardship and advocacy efforts for the park.
LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN PARK

- Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave Site
- Pahaska Tepee
- Lariat Trail
- Lookout Mountain Shelter
- Panoramic Views
- More than one million visitors each year

Bicyclist climbing the Lariat Trail

View from Lookout Mountain Park

Clear Creek from Colorow Point, Lookout Mountain Park
Lookout Mountain Park with the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave

Background

Lookout Mountain Park has it all – a panoramic view stretching from the Continental Divide to downtown Denver, acres of wooded foothills, the grave and historic collection of western legend Buffalo Bill, mountain meadows, a distinctive stone shelter, a twisting scenic mountain road, and the Beaver Brook Trail. The area is divided into a picnic area to the west below the summit and the Buffalo Bill “campus” to the east with Pahaska Tepee and Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave.

Even before Buffalo Bill fell in love with the mountain top, Denver leaders recognized its scenic beauty and spectacular setting. In 1915, they set aside 66 acres of forested foothills and steep escarpments as a key resting spot along the Lookout Mountain Drive (later renamed the Lariat Trail). Spectacular vistas are still breathtaking along this twisting mountain boulevard, designed by Olmsted and built by Cement Bill Williams in 1913. Stone pillars at the base in Golden mark the entry to the Denver Mountain Parks.

Since its opening in 1921, Pahaska Tepee has embodied the romantic nature of the great American West. Until the 1970s when a new museum was built, Pahaska displayed the Buffalo Bill collection organized after Cody was buried on the summit in 1917. The rustic building of native log and stone wraps partially around the gravesite, and its low profile blends compatibly with the foothills landscape while still maintaining a grand presence. It originally housed a curio shop, soda fountain, and a formal dining room. Today a concessionaire runs a small restaurant and large gift shop year round. A large parking lot takes up the rest of the site.
entry into the Buffalo Bill gravesite are possibilities. The entire park is suffering from long-term degradation, and restoration of the landscape is needed.

Lookout Mountain and especially the Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum and Pahaska Tepee, have the potential to become one of Denver’s premiere tourist attractions. Every aspect of the campus needs evaluation, from access and entry experiences to the quality of the exhibit space. Probably no other cultural institution owned by Denver attracts as diverse and passionate a crowd as Buffalo Bill. The historic and architecturally distinctive Pahaska Tepee lodge draws steady crowds year-round for its gifts and rustic restaurant but lacks accessible restrooms and is run down.

Its status as a totally city-run museum, without a fund-raising Board, also limits the Buffalo Bill Museum’s ability to grow. Building the capacity to enhance this park and its internationally known facilities and museum collection are a priority of this Master Plan. It is unmatched in the American West.
Lookout Mountain Park Recommendations

A. Protect and restore the significant natural landscape of Lookout Mountain Park
   - Develop site-appropriate measures to protect significant natural resources and habitat from concentrated public use areas. Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected.
   - Consider prioritizing the closing of littered and trampled picnic areas for revegetation.
   - Remove diseased or dying trees along the Lariat Trail.
   - Create a management plan for the park that protects the natural resources within the park and that is compatible with the best management practices on the adjacent open space parcels.

B. Use conservation easements, trail easements and acquisition to protect Lookout Mountain Park and its larger open space network.
   - Work with adjacent property owners to acquire land or to obtain conservation easements for those properties that benefit the park.

C. Recognize the iconic role that Lookout Mountain Park plays within the Mountain Park system and comprehensively plan for its next 100 years.
   - Work with a Museum Advisory Committee to develop a vision for the Grave and Museum for the next 100 years.
   - Undertake a comprehensive rehabilitation of the physical setting of the Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum and Pahaska Tepee, to upgrade its appearance and better accommodate visitors.
   - Create a visitor experience and identity that begins before one arrives at the entry drive and that continues through a visit to the Grave and Museum.
   - Rehabilitate Pahaska Tepee and evaluate potential other uses for the building.
   - Consider building a new museum building that meets the needs of the Museum including archival storage, exhibit space, office space, meeting space, and gift shop.
   - Create an authentic and high quality experience that attracts visitors who will care for the park’s natural and historic resources.
   - Build the organizational capacity to create and sustain a new museum and campus through a new private-public governance model and fund-raising Board of Directors.
D. Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Lookout Mountain Park that accommodates all users and both the picnic site and the Grave and Museum site. Provide improved parking and picnic sites, restrooms, and an experiential park trail to connect the two sites.

- Improve vehicular ingress and egress from the Lariat Trail.
- Rehabilitate the Lookout Mountain Shelter and meadows for continued use as a picnic site. Reconfigure the parking area for aesthetics and improved use.

E. Create a wayfinding system to clearly indicate designated trails, trailheads, and associated parking.

- Identify, through signage and maps, designated trails in the parks, while also closing, obliterating, and revegetating social trails.
- Identify and close problematic social trails including:
  - between picnic area and Buffalo Bill complex parking lot
  - between Buffalo Bill entrance and grave site
  - between Buffalo Bill parking lot and Wildcat Point
When Denver began building the Squaw Pass Road in 1918, they envisioned a ‘skyline drive to the summit of Mount Evans.’ The City also acquired Echo and Summit Lakes in the hope that this ‘scenic wonderland without peer’ would become the gateway to a new national park that the City was proposing to Congress. The ‘Denver National Park’ was never designated, but the move forged a long-term relationship between Denver and the United States Forest Service to build the highway to the peak.

The 616-acre Echo Lake Park has a natural lake at 10,600 feet in the valley at the base of Goliath Peak surrounded by a thick spruce-fir forest. A steep portion of the park lies across Highway 103.

Echo Lake is the only Mountain Park within the subalpine zone. Its eastern edges are characterized by a large complex of subalpine wetland and shrub riparian vegetation. Portions of this wetland may be a 10,000-year-old fen—a sensitive and irreplaceable resource. The lake is part of the Echo Lake Potential Conservation Area and has high biodiversity significance for its rare and globally vulnerable subalpine plants, including reflected moonwort, Mingan’s moonwort, and western moonwort.

The Municipal Lodge at Echo Lake, a log building completed in 1927, sits majestically on the eastern shore of the lake overlooking a spectacular subalpine setting. Echo Lake Lodge was designed for visiting overnight guests, complete with sleeping rooms, a fireplace lounge, and dining room. Today, the lodge serves as a seasonal gift shop and restaurant with lodging only for the concessionaire and employees.
The Echo Lake Shelter, a granite rubble stone structure, was built in 1924 to face the lake and future lodge. To the north of the shelter is the Echo Lake Concession Stand of similar construction built in 1924 to rent skates and sell food. Areas not trampled by continued use also have an understory of shrubs such as willow thickets, shrubby cinquefoil, red-berried elder, bush honeysuckle, and thimbleberry.

Echo Lake Park attracts a broad cultural cross-section of visitors picnicking, fishing, sightseeing, walking, and hiking. An accessible trail loops around Echo Lake and connects to the lodge and its parking lot. Trails from the parking lot and back side of the lake lead to backcountry access into the Chicago Lakes area with a route up Mount Evans.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

Echo Lake’s natural and cultural resources are threatened by use and long-deferred improvements. With the lodge, lake and subalpine setting within an hour of Denver, Echo Lake is one of the most popular Mountain Parks. However, the heavy, concentrated use at the picnic sites and the lake edge degrades the natural resources and diminishes the visitor experience. The accessible loop around the lake shares the road at this point. Unclear and inadequate parking along the lake also contributes to the problem.

Rehabilitation of its historic features, including picnic sites, stone shelters, roads, and parking areas are key to maintaining the authentic rustic setting that draws so many international visitors and local Denverites. Upgrading Echo Lake Lodge could include feasibility studies to look at expanded seasons and uses. The Mountain Parks have few ADA accessible recreational experiences, and Echo Lake Park offers an environment around the Lake in the lower portions of the park to expand these types of experiences. Visitors of all abilities welcome the stop to eat and shop in the timeless character of the Lodge. Additional picnic areas and trails also may be needed to accommodate growing crowds. To avoid the encroaching private development that has impacted other Mountain Parks, collaboration with the United States Forest Service to acquire or safeguard a buffer around the park is important.
Echo Lake

- 616 acres
- Elevation -10,600 feet
- Significant for occurrences of rare and globally vulnerable subalpine plants: reflected moonwort, Mingan’s moonwort, and western moonwort.
ECHO LAKE RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Protect and restore Echo Lake by protecting its significant vegetation including its subalpine riparian vegetation and wetlands, particularly the fen on its eastern edge.

- Develop site-appropriate measures to protect wetland riparian habitat from concentrated public use areas. Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected.

- Designate areas where access to the lake is appropriate, recognizing that many visitors enjoy physical access to water.

- Develop designated picnic sites and points of access to Echo Lake.
B. Rehabilitate Echo Lake Park’s historic stone structures, historic picnic sites, and connections to Echo Lake and the Chicago Basin.
   ▶ Continue implementing the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment recommendations in upgrading historic facilities for recreation use.

C. Use conservation easements, trail easements and acquisition to protect Echo Lake Park.
   ▶ Work with adjacent property owners to acquire land or obtain conservation easements for those properties that benefit Echo Lake Park. These parcels include an inholding between mountain parks land and USFS land.

D. Rehabilitate Echo Lake Lodge to protect its architectural and historical character, upgrade its appearance, and better accommodate its visitors.
   ▶ Study the feasibility of a new recreation role for the Lodge, including winterization for expanded seasons, overnight accommodations, etc.

E. Upgrade Echo Lake Park’s physical infrastructure, including vehicular access, picnicking, and trails into and around the Echo Lake picnic site.
   ▶ Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Echo Lake Park to address vehicular ingress and egress, parking along Highway 103, picnicking, hiking, trail access, and lake access.
   ▶ Undertake a comprehensive rehabilitation of the entire picnic site through revegetation measures including restoring native vegetation, and by defining clear circulation routes.
   ▶ Reconfigure parking areas for aesthetics and improved use.

F. Develop a new hiking only trail in Echo Lake Park on the east side of Highway 103.
   ▶ Connect to the Echo Lake picnic site and improve Highway 103 to provide a safe pedestrian crossing between the trail and the picnic site.
Summit Lake Park

Background
From east to west, Denver’s Mountain Park system showcases the region’s geologic history and includes all of the Colorado major life zones. At 12,830 feet in elevation, Summit Lake Park is the highest of the Mountain Parks and one of the most scenic and unique. It is nestled at the bottom of a high alpine cirque, located about one half mile north and 1,300 feet below the summit of Mount Evans, and is the only Denver Mountain Park in the alpine zone.

Situated above timberline, Summit Lake Park supports a rare array of alpine vegetation that survives the extreme conditions and short growing season. Some plants are only found here and within the Arctic Circle. Rocky soils are interspersed with alpine tundra—a diverse mix of low-lying grasses, perennial sedges, wildflowers, and mosses.

Common and noticeable wildlife species at the park are the yellow-bellied marmot, pika, and mountain goat. Other common mammals include bighorn sheep, several species of vole, and weasel. Common bird species include white-tailed ptarmigan, water pipit, and rosy finch.

Summit Lake Park is only accessible from late spring until early autumn along the Mount Evans Road that begins at Echo Lake Lodge. The park is entirely surrounded by Arapaho National Forest lands. Except for the Mount Evans Road corridor, these lands are designated as Mount Evans Wilderness. Visitors first pass through a USFS entry station, and anyone planning to stop along the road, at Summit Lake or at Mount Evans Summit, pays a fee to the USFS. Denver receives a share of those fees for Summit Lake improvements and operations.

―Denver and Her Mountain Parks, circa 1918-20
One of the most scenic . . . trips is to Squaw Pass, elevation 9,800 feet. It is approximately ten and one-half miles from Bergen Park by road. Where it ends, the Pike National Forest commences. The United States Forest Service will continue this road three miles westward during the summer. Its destination is Echo Lake . . . This will be the first link in the Mount Evans drive. From Squaw Pass a steep trail leads up Squaw Mountain to Window Ledge from which the plains, Pikes Peak and the entire Mount Evans group is visible. Experienced travelers class it as the most beautiful viewpoint in the Mountain Parks system."

The most striking feature of the park is Summit Lake and its alpine wetlands. A small stone structure sits in a gradually sloping alpine meadow on the lake’s eastern edge, offering a welcome refuge from what can be wild, windy weather. The stone rubble shelter was built in 1926, two years after Denver acquired the 160 acres surrounding the lake. The rugged wildness of Mount Evans and the Chicago Lakes Basin makes it popular for wilderness hiking opportunities. Summit Lake is connected to Echo Lake by a hiking trail that follows the Chicago Lakes Basin, located primarily in the Arapaho National Forest.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

Summit Lake Park protects some of most important natural resources and habitat within the DMP system and is designated a National Natural Landmark. Nestled in the Arapaho Forest, Summit Lake offers a remote natural experience for its visitors.

The goal is to preserve this unique experience for future generations through resource protection and through the development of appropriate site improvements that allow visitors reasonable access. Site improvements that direct visitors to the shelter and restrooms, and along established trails are needed to protect the lake and fragile landscape. Improvements should be of the highest quality, reaffirming the DMP rustic naturalistic design style, especially subordinating built elements to nature, the views, and topography. Carefully siting parking, trails, restrooms, and other visitor facilities is key in protecting Summit Lake for the future.

### Summit Lake Park Recommendations

**A. Protect Summit Lake and its alpine wetlands and rocky talus.**

- Develop site-appropriate measures to protect the alpine wetlands around Summit Lake by limiting public access.
- Clearly identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected. Recognizing that many visitors enjoy physical access to water, habitat protection efforts should include designated areas where access to the lakeshore is appropriate.

**B. Identify and close problematic social trails that damage wetland or alpine tundra.**

- Identify, through signage and maps, designated trails in the park, while also closing, obliterating, and revegetating social trails.
- Manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.

**C. Improve Visitor Access and Experience**

- Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Summit Lake Park to address vehicular egress and ingress, as well as hiking, trail access, and lake access.
- Reconfigure the parking area for aesthetics and improved use.
- Add interpretive materials and accessible amenities in the park, including access to the Chicago Basin overlook.
Background

As a world-class ski resort attracting visitors from around the world, Winter Park Ski Resort is probably the most unusual Denver Mountain Park. Set at the base of the Continental Divide in the Fraser Valley in Grand County, Winter Park has a vast terrain across three interconnected mountains and an alpine bowl. The ski area offers more than 134 designated runs on 2,886 acres, and runs the important National Sports Center for the Disabled. As with all the mountain parks, Winter Park Ski Resort offers close access to Denver.

Although not a designated park, Winter Park Ski Resort base is on city-owned land purchased by Denver in 1939-1940. Parks Manager George Cranmer envisioned the Winter Park area offering a full spectrum of winter activities within the DMP system. For years, the West Portal of the Moffat Tunnel had been a popular destination for early skiing enthusiasts. Cranmer negotiated a Special Use Permit with the USFS for 6,400 acres at the Portal in order to build new trails and lifts. Denver traded City land near Parshall for another 88.9 acres adjacent to the permitted area for a base.

Working with the Arlberg Club and the Colorado Mountain Club, Cranmer successfully raised the funds and gathered enough volunteers to clear slopes and build a tow. More than 10,000 people attended its grand opening on January 28, 1940. Thousands of kids and families have ridden the Winter Park Ski Train from Union Depot in downtown Denver to the West Portal. In the past two decades, considerable development at the base has added new hotels and summer attractions, such as golf and alpine slides.

The Winter Park Ski Association is Denver’s nonprofit arm that oversees Winter Park. Today Winter Park Ski Resort is managed through a long-term lease (through 2078) between the City & County of Denver and IntraWest Corporation. This partnership allows IntraWest
to operate, invest in, and develop the city-owned ski resort and provides Parks and Recreation with more than $2 million annually in payments to Parks and Recreation. Through the Winter Park Trust Fund, these dollars are spent on capital park and recreation projects across the city including approximately $200,000 a year for Mountain Parks improvements. As of 2012, this amount is expected to increase, as Denver will receive an annual payment equal to $2 million plus three percent of gross revenue over $33 million subject to cash flow.

In addition to funding, the partnership between Denver and Winter Park extends to programs such as Winter Park’s Youth Ski Club and the ski area’s support of Denver’s Learn to Ski Program. In 2007, Winter Park donated 1000 lift tickets to Denver, who made them available to Parks and Recreation and local nonprofit groups to allow children the opportunity to pursue these outdoor sports. Winter Park also is home to the U.S. National Sports Center for the Disabled and known for its special programs on the slopes. Although Winter Park is best known for its winter sports, it also offers a varied program of summer activities including chair lift rides, rock climbing (on walls), an alpine slide, and miniature golf.

Challenges and Opportunities
Winter Park and its special programs have a unique, fee and revenue based niche in the DMP system and importance to the city and region as a whole. The resort also provides a funding source that could be used to support the Mountain Park system directly. Most notably, Winter Park offers the opportunity to expand the palette of activities that Denver offers to its youth in both the winter and the summer.

There is the opportunity to strengthen the partnership between Winter Park and Denver to provide even more winter sports opportunities and to add new programs through the City’s Recreation Program. Garnering a greater share of the City’s yearly CIP funds (which include the Winter Park funds) for DMP is a major recommendation in this Plan and symbolically important, because one major source comes from what was planned as the DMP winter playland.

Winter Park Recommendations

A. Research and implement potential new revenues from Winter Park to support the Denver Mountain Park system.
   - Collaborate with Winter Park on potential voluntary programs, such as personal contributions added to lift tickets, that could generate additional funds for the DMP system.
   - Dedicate any increases resulting from the 2012 shift in revenue formula to Mountain Parks improvements.

B. Expand programs and partnerships between Denver and Winter Park Ski Resort to benefit Denver youth.
   - Expand donations from Winter Park, such as the ski ticket donation, to summer-time activities to encourage nonprofits and families to experience Winter Park year-round.
   - Expand winter and summer programs offered by Denver to provide more opportunities for youth, seniors and families to participate in outdoor activities.
The Hearts of the Denver Mountain Parks system are large special parks that exhibit their own individualistic characteristics and provide unique settings with special experiences.

The Hearts are the core of the Mountain Park system. Each Heart has its own distinct natural setting, such as the forested hillsides and open meadows of Genesee Park and the high plains prairie of Daniels Park where bison related to the Yellowstone herds of the late 19th century still graze.

Each Heart offers a distinct recreational experience, from the large group picnic sites in secluded Newton Park to a ropes course in Genesee Park.

Beautiful, rustic buildings and shelters are integral to each of the Hearts, such as the remarkable rustic shelter at Dedisse Park, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps overlooking Evergreen Lake.

The Hearts are:

- Genesee Park (and Katherine Craig)
- Dedisse Park
- Newton Park
- Daniels Park
View of Centennial Cone from Lookout Mountain Park
Background

The formal opening of the Mountain Parks by the Denver Park Commission on August 27, 1913, included a visit to ‘Genesee Mountain Park,’ where “an unobstructed view of mountain and plain” was had by all after a ¾ hour hike to the top of Genesee Mountain. This outing and the inclusion of Genesee Park in the ceremony was a sweet moment, because it had been the campaign to ‘save Genesee Mountain’ that catalyzed the first acquisitions for the Mountain Park system. Denver began efforts to purchase most of the current Genesee Park as its first Mountain Park in 1912, in collaboration with a group of Denver businessmen, saving the pine forest from becoming a lumber source for a sawmill.

At 2,413 acres, Genesee Park is the largest Mountain Park, offering the greatest diversity of experiences in the system. Families can hold a reunion and picnic at the large Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) historic shelter and picnic area near the summit. Visitors can RV- or tent-camp overnight at Chief Hosa Campground. Kids can camp overnight in tents for the first time in their lives and take home a new sleeping bag through the Wonderful Outdoor World (WOW) program. Hikers can forget the city is nearby on the rugged, historic Beaver Brook Trail.

At Chief Hosa Lodge, visitors can experience a major life event such as a wedding or bar mitzvah. Travelers can stop and see the bison herd along I-70, or venture to the top of Genesee Mountain where the panoramic view connecting mountain and plains is spectacular. Today, the bison herd of about 25 head is a well-known and highly appreciated landmark along Interstate 70.

Genesee Park

“...a letter received by Fred C. Steinhaeuer, Superintendent of Parks, from the Secretary of the Interior, Washington D.C. notifies him of the transfer from the Yellowstone National Park, for Genesse Mountain Park of 25 elk, also 25 elk for parks across the state. Besides this allotment of 50 elk, the Denver City Park will receive six elk and two male buffalo, making a total of 16 elk and 17 buffalo in City Park.”

—Elk for Mountain Park, Denver Municipal Facts.
Stapleton Drive Trailhead – for three popular hiking trails: the Beaver Brook Trail, the Braille Trail, and the Chavez Trail.

The Braille Trail is 6/10ths of a mile with interpretive signs in Braille and a waist-high guide wire designed for blind hikers.

The Beaver Brook Trail is an 8.75 mile long moderately difficult primitive hiking trail traversing the south slope of Clear Creek, from Genesee Park to Windy Saddle on Lookout Mountain.

The 2-mile-long Chavez Trail forms a 3.5 mile loop connecting with the Beaver Brook Trail.
Genesee Park has an undulating character of rolling hillsides, mountain valleys, thick pine forests, and open grassy glades. Its topography reaches to 8,284 feet at the summit of Genesee Mountain, extends to 7,988 feet at a prominent point on the Park’s north side, and meets Clear Creek Canyon at the Park’s lowest point at 6,280 feet. Stands of old growth ponderosa that provide important habitat for wildlife and contribute to overall forest diversity are found in Genesee Park.

Challenges and Opportunities

Genesee Park is the gateway to the Denver Mountain Parks system. Its size and location close to the center of the system, its proximity to Denver, and its direct access to Interstate I-70 give Genesee Park a special prominence. Its role as an important conservation area and its broad offering of outdoor experiences for children and families make Genesee Park a center of activity for the Mountain Parks.

Because of its potential, Genesee Park warrants intensive program and site planning. For example, Chief Hosa Lodge has had many lives, from a rest stop with refreshments to wartime museum to today’s use as a successful event center. The site also offers a spectacular orientation to the Mountain Parks where visitors could find information on trails and activities, get a cold beverage, or attend a special event. Camping, too, has always been a part of the Genesee experience, with the established tent and RV site adjacent to the lodge, the more informal campground with restrooms on the north side, and DPR tent camping on Stapleton Drive.

With the desire to encourage more Denver families and kids to have a first time mountain and camping experience, the existing campus and facilities need to be assessed to meet contemporary and future needs. For example, the immediacy of the Chief Hosa Campground with RVs detracts from the scenic qualities and beauty of the lodge yet provides a niche for wedding camping. The Challenge Course itself could benefit from associated facilities, such as Chief Hosa Lodge. The potential exists for new facilities and camping areas, for a new closer role between Katherine Craig and Genesee Park, and expansion or relocation of the Challenge Course.
Genesee Park boasts “the first nature trail in Colorado,” the Beaver Brook Trail built in 1917.

In 1931, landscape architect M. Walter Pesman, horticulturist George W. Kelly, and naturalist Robert Niedrach reworked the Beaver Brook Trail, which was originally the Chimney Gulch trail, into an educational experience in the outdoors.

Pesman, who was a founder of the Denver Botanic Gardens, brought outdoor education to the mountain parks by improving the trail and adding “green and orange” labels describing the names and characteristics of trees and shrubs, and telling stories of the area’s history.

Genesee Park is ready for vision. The setting is in need of a facelift to improve its prominence and public role. New parking areas sensitively integrated with the natural setting, trail waysides and kiosks, and new trails can connect all of Genesee Park together. When no longer fenced for elk, the north slopes could provide more internal trails. The current informal pull-off to view the bison on Mt. Vernon Road could become a safer, pleasant opportunity to interpret the herd to the public.

Three new regional trails are proposed to connect Genesee Park with the larger regional open space system. One is the new multiple use trail, that will parallel I-70 on park property from the Park’s east entry to its western boundary. This link will allow bicyclists to ride a 60 km route from Golden to Bakerville without entering the highway. The other two regional trails are both multiple use trails that will provide key connections with Jefferson County Open Space’s regional trail system. One will connect to Kerr Gulch Road and extend through Genesee Park for a short distance. A second small, but equally important, connection is a multiple use trail on the Park’s northwestern edge that will provide a connection to the future Clear Creek regional trail.

Finally, to continue as a conservation area for both wildlife and natural areas, additional efforts are needed to protect the Park’s natural resources. The elk herd, which is descended from the original Yellowstone Park herd of 1913, is no longer exposed to the over-hunting that a century ago nearly drove the species to extinction. Elk are now one of the most common and prolific mammals in Colorado. A resident wild elk herd has also established itself throughout the mountain parks foothills environment, and the elk enclosure now creates a significant barrier for many wildlife species including wild elk, deer, mountain lion, and bears.

**Genesee Park Recommendations**

A. Close the social trails within the Park that are damaging the hillside and causing erosion.
   - Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
   - Sell the elk, close the elk enclosure, and eliminate or modify fencing to allow for greater movement of wildlife and potential new internal trails.

B. Protect the bison herd and its enclosure as important characteristics of Genesee Park.

C. Define Genesee Park as the outdoor recreation and conservation hub of the Denver Mountain Parks system.
   - Complete a recreation, event, and facility plan for Genesee Park, including the role of Katherine Craig. Assess the following suggestions:
     1) Continue building partnerships with other youth providers to explore options for youth programs and facilities
     2) Discuss improvements and future uses of Katherine Craig, currently under lease to the Colorado Girl Scouts
Better identify Genesee Park as a destination from I-70.

Provide clear access and upgrade facilities in the northern portion of the Genesee Park as a hiking hub.

D. Develop a scenic overlook on Mount Vernon Road to safely view the bison herd and the spectacular view.

- Provide parking, walks, and interpretive signage. Develop the site to minimize intrusions on views, adjacent neighbors, and on the bison herd.

- Provide access to the bison enclosure for DMP staff.

E. Upgrade Genesee Park’s physical infrastructure to accommodate picnicking and hiking.

- Upgrade existing park facilities including parking, picnic areas, and restrooms.

F. Develop a new regional multi-use trail along the I-70 corridor within Genesee Park for bicycling, hiking, and equestrian use.

- Connect the Chief Hosa area with the new Buffalo Herd Overlook site.

- Connect to the regional bicycle trail from downtown Denver to Clear Creek County.

G. Connect to the regional trail system at Chief Hosa Lodge.

- Connect to the Jefferson County Open Space regional trail on Kerr Gulch Road.

H. Create a hiking hub at Genesee Park by adding hiking only trails within the park.

- Develop a north-south trail to connect Chief Hosa Lodge with the northern portion of the park, particularly the northern parking area.

Genesee Park includes Stapleton Drive and Rainbow Hill park areas, the Chief Hosa Lodge and Campground, the Patrick House, and a stone shelter constructed in 1939 by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Patrick House was a toll station in the park for collecting tolls from teams and stagecoaches at the onset of the gold rush. The Daughters of the American Revolution celebrate an annual, commemorative flag raising on Flag Day at the summit of Genesee Mountain.
Evergreen Lake in Dedisse Park
Dedisse Park

"At the junction with the Bear Creek road lies Dedisse Park, acquired by the city this year. A dam is to be thrown across Bear Creek at the lower end of this park and a sixty-five acre lake created where Denver’s residents and visitors may enjoy trout fishing, boating and camping."

—The Mountain Parks, Denver Municipal Facts, April & May 1920

Background
In 1919, when Evergreen was already a favorite summer retreat, the City & County of Denver acquired the ranchlands of Dedisse Ranch as a site for Evergreen Lake. The city had begun this process in 1916 through a condemnation suit to acquire the ranch. These lands included the Bear Creek valley and spectacular views to the west towards Elephant Butte, Hicks Mountain, and Bergen Peak. These three peaks are protected as Denver Mountain Park Conservation/Wilderness areas.

The completion of the Bear Creek road in 1915 preceded the acquisition and laid the foundation for building park facilities.

By 1925, Denver had transformed the western valley of Dedisse Ranch into the 18-hole Evergreen Golf Course, complete with its Keys on the Greens clubhouse. By 1928, the eastern valley was flooded and the construction of the dam, the 65-acre Evergreen Lake, and the road along the lake were completed. The beauty of the lake with its perfect reflection of the surrounding mountains was touted as enriching quaint downtown Evergreen.

Dedisse Park’s 420 acres are bisected by Upper Bear Creek road. Most of the acreage consists of forested ridges and open meadows in the foothills vegetation and habitat zone. The park is rich in ecological diversity and is dominated by mixed ponderosa pine forests with open grassy clearings and shrublands on south-facing slopes. During the 1930s, the area north of Upper Bear Creek Road was developed into a park by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Three picnic sites and a stone and timber shelter were created. The sensitive siting of roads, structures, and overlooks was in keeping with the National Park Service’s rustic naturalistic design ethic.
The CCC stone shelter and overlook dominates the Park’s most interesting and breathtaking setting. The log and stone shelter is beautifully integrated into the hillside overlooking Evergreen Lake. Today, the shelter site is regularly used by groups through Denver’s reservation system.

Dedisse Park offers a broad mix of outdoor activities suited to all types of weather. Evergreen Park and Recreation (EPRD) built and manages the Lake House. The Evergreen Nature Center is a recent nonprofit effort providing programs and displays during the summer in the historic Warming House. Warmth and skates are still available during the winter. A concessionaire manages the Denver-owned 18-hole golf course and restaurant.

In the northern section of the park, permitted and nonpermitted picnic sites and twisting mountain roads offer opportunities to explore Dedisse Park’s ecological diversity and solitude. Jefferson County Open Space’s Pioneer Trail extends through the park connecting to the Evergreen community and looping around Evergreen Lake. The Dedisse Trail weaves through the western and northern portions of the Park, connecting to multiple use trails in Jefferson County’s Alderfer-Three Sisters Park.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

Dedisse Park has some of the best designed and highest quality structures, roadwork, and woods and meadows. The Colorado State Forest Service has thinned and restored the ponderosa pine woodlands in Dedisse to the original wide forest spacing and interpreted that work through signage. It is a model Denver Mountain Park. At the same time, it is connected to wider, regional amenities through partnerships with EPRD and Jefferson County Open Space. As Evergreen grows, the popularity and programming of large events at the lake increases and trail use also grows, impacting the park. Preserving the natural and cultural resources in the face of increasing use, traffic, and growth is the major challenge at Dedisse. It is an issue facing both Denver Mountain Parks and EPRD.
Dedisse Park Recommendations

A. Work with other agencies and organizations to restore Bear Creek. Bear Creek is a critical, diverse stream corridor that provides water to adjacent communities, protects significant aquatic and riparian habitat, and offers a unique scenic resource.
   - Pursue a multiple agency approach that includes local, state and federal agencies as well as other interested stakeholders.

B. Close the social trails adjacent to the picnic sites that are damaging hillsides and causing erosion.
   - Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
   - Close the informal trail access point along Upper Bear Creek Road, opposite the Golf Course Clubhouse.
   - Investigate potential new picnic areas west of the lake to decrease informal, damaging picnic areas.

C. Work with EPRD to coordinate the impact of large events on Dedisse Park and the Evergreen area surrounding the lake.

D. Use conservation easements, trail easements, and acquisition to protect the parks.
   - Work with property owners with inholdings in Dedisse Park to acquire land or to obtain conservation easements.

E. Rehabilitate the CCC designed and built parking and picnic sites and add restrooms.
   - Develop a comprehensive site master plan for the northern section of Dedisse Park.
   - Provide a hiking-only trail within the northern section of the park to connect the three picnic sites.
   - Provide for safe vehicular ingress and egress from Evergreen Parkway.

F. Rehabilitate the Overlook Shelter and adjacent grassy meadows for continued use as a permitted picnic site.
   - Continue implementing the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment recommendations in upgrading historic facilities for recreation use.

G. Work with the Evergreen Nature Center and EPRD to pursue joint recreation and environmental programming opportunities in Dedisse and at the lake.

H. Continue efforts to make the Evergreen Golf Course more environmentally and financially sound.
Newton Park
Newton Park

Background
Newton Park was the last park to join the DMP system. James Q. Newton, the father of Quigg Newton (Denver mayor from 1945 to 1951), donated the park to the City through two transactions, one in 1939 and the other in 1962. It originally was the family ranch. Located 32 miles from downtown Denver on Foxton Road, just south of U.S. 285, Newton Park encompasses 424 acres in Jefferson County. It is the only Mountain Park that is entirely fenced and is available only by reservation.

Newton Park has three distinct valleys where large shelters, potable water, electricity, restrooms, and recreation areas offer private group retreats with spectacular views to the south. Rolling hills separate the valleys, and the northernmost hill rises to a craggy, unnamed peak on the Park’s northwestern edge that is highly visible from U.S. 285. Each valley is a named picnic site, beginning with Juvenile at the north, Commissioner to the east in the center, and Stromberg farthest southeast.

The sites are popular for family and company gatherings and for special events, especially on warm weekends in the spring, summer, and fall. Large grills, informal ballfields, volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, and fire pits offer all the basic amenities for these gatherings.

The design of the Newton Park shelters is clearly from the 1960s-1970s, giving Newton a distinctive character differing from the other DMP.
Challenges and Opportunities
Newton Park’s three distinct valleys, each with a large group picnic site, spectacular views and open fields, offer the best opportunity in the DMP system for the addition of facilities for environmental education, leadership programs, and outdoor camps. Limited rock climbing may be possible. The participation of the DPR Recreation Division is critical to bringing groups to Newton Park, as they would provide transportation and programming.

Newton Park’s role as a managed park where all of its use is permitted also offers an opportunity to expand the Recreation Division’s successful Ropes Course program. Genesee Park, where the Ropes Course is currently located, provides a great location, close to downtown Denver, but its siting in the midst of Genesee Park’s trail system is not as private as it should be. Newton Park offers an opportunity to create an additional site for a Ropes Course that could also be marketed to the south metropolitan area.

The Park is very popular during warm weekends, but has little use during the week. The park’s setting and existing facilities offer a way to explore the foothills and the Mountain Parks through a broad range of activities including hiking, climbing, field sports, campfires, picnics, nature programs, and more. Although Newton Park has many facilities for more organized park activities, the Park does not have any trails, limiting the ability of users to explore the park’s natural environment.

Physical improvements to the park’s infrastructure are necessary, including improved access and parking, restrooms, and the addition of hiking trails, to provide an outdoor experience and to access potential rock climbing sites. The park is currently usable for the short-term as is, with the existing picnic shelter and fields for day trips and educational activities. Organized tent camping could also occur in the informal field for the short-term.

Although Newton Park is very popular for special events, most activities occur in or immediately adjacent to the picnic sites, and there are no park trails. A few social trails exist on the hillsides, but they

Popular for Picnics
In the summers of 2006 and 2007, the three picnic sites at Newton Park welcomed more than 8,500 people, generating more than $22,500 for the Mountain Park system. This exceeds the total reservations at Dedisse and Genesee Parks combined for the same period.

Weddings, graduation parties, family reunions, church services, and corporate events are among the gatherings taking place here, and many groups return year after year.
do not connect and are eroding the hillsides. Several natural routes exist for a new hiking only trail that could encourage users to explore Newton Park’s flora and fauna and provide access to the ridges between the three picnic sites, where a spectacular view of the southern mountains rewards the climb. Parking areas are visually intrusive.

Newton Park Recommendations

A. Close the social trails adjacent to the three picnic sites that are damaging the hillsides and causing erosion.

- Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.

B. Protect the peak and the park’s natural environment as these lands provide critical open space and a striking scenic, undeveloped backdrop.

- Continue to protect the craggy peak and the park parcel on the north side of US 285.

C. Continue to manage Newton Park as a permitted facility on the weekends. Consider opening the park to informal day use if weekday permitted uses aren’t developed.

D. Expand Newton Park’s role as a camp setting where Denver’s mission of connecting people, especially kids, with nature can be realized.

- Create an outdoor educational program through the Recreation Division to bring Denverites to explore the foothills and the Mountain Parks.
- Transform a Newton area into a camp setting where day camps and overnight excursions can be held during the week. Study Newton as a potential site for a relocated DPS Outdoor Lab for elementary school children.

E. Add hiking only trails to explore Newton Park’s hillsides, ravines, and craggy peak in a safe and manageable way.

- Create a hiking only trail to climb up the hillside and onto the ridge between the Juvenile and Commissioner sites.
- Create a hiking only trail to continue up the hillside, using switchbacks to gain access to the craggy peak. Areas of the peak could be used for bouldering and climbing for day camp activities.

F. Consider more recreational opportunities for Newton Park, such as a ropes course, limited rock climbing, or cross-country skiing.

KIDS AND NATURE

A nationwide recognition exists that children are becoming more disconnected from the natural world despite growing research that links educational gains and mental, social, and physical health with that connection.

In many ways, Denver Mountain Parks can be the closest, most comfortable experience with wildlife and the Colorado mountains for Denver’s kids and families and everyone in between.

- Upgrade existing infrastructure including:
  1) rehabilitating the existing group picnic shelters and shelter sites,
  2) providing an additional enclosed shelter,
  3) upgrading the restrooms, and
  4) improving site access and parking.

- Consider adding new cabins to accommodate overnight use, built in a manner that respects the character of the park.
Daniels Park

“In 1927, Mr. Charles McAllister Wilcox donated 40 acres of what is now Daniels Park to Denver. Soon thereafter, Mrs. Florence Martin of Denver, who had received an inheritance from the wife of Major William C. Daniels, donated about 960 adjoining acres to the city, to be known as Daniels Park.”

—A Colorado Taxpayer Report, Vol XXVI, No. 6, November 30, 1979

Background

Daniels Park, the only Denver Mountain Park in Douglas County, is characterized by its unique sandstone ridge setting, historic ranch, bison herd, and spectacular view. A trip along Daniels Park Road offers a 100-mile view extending from Pike’s Peak to the Mummy Range near the Wyoming border. Views to the north capture downtown Denver and Denver International Airport.

A herd of bison roams the majority of Daniels Park’s upper elevations of mixed prairie grasslands and shrubby Gambel’s oak. Daniels Park Road traverses the top of the park’s high sandstone mesa along an elevation of approximately 6500 feet, connecting the park’s diverse features. Its alignment follows the original path of one of the first Colorado Territorial Roads, an 1850s wagon and stage road.

A prominently placed stone shelter near the southern entrance was designed by J.J.B. Benedict. It overlooks the mesa landscape and is the one feature that easily identifies Daniels Park as a Denver Mountain Park.

The historic Florence Martin Ranch, designated as a Denver Landmark Historic District, currently accommodates park maintenance and is closed to the public. The Tall Bull Memorial in the north section of the park is reserved for Native Americans who use the site for ceremonies and activities. The Kit Carson Memorial marks the site of Carson’s last campfire in 1868.

Daniels Park is an important landscape within a larger regional open space system of 11,000 acres that protects the unique rimrock landscape that stretches from Sedalia to C470 in Highlands Ranch. The other open space parcels are private and public lands that include the Sanctuary Golf Course, immediately adjacent to Daniels Park on the south. To the west is ‘The Backcountry,’ a private open space.
managed by Highlands Ranch. South of the park’s undeveloped lands is the Cherokee Ranch, a historic ranch of 3,000 acres protected by a conservation easement that will preserve its open lands in perpetuity.

Daniels Park’s 1,000 acres is split into two parcels by Daniels Park Road and the mesa rim. Below the mesa rim is a dramatic landscape of canyons, low mesas, and hills covered with dense Gambel’s oak, ponderosa pine, and an understory of grasses and forbs. On the mesa top is a rolling mixed prairie grassland that is characteristic of the Colorado Front Range lowlands. Prairie grasses are interspersed with clusters of Gambel’s oak along the east-facing drainages, and an extensive prairie dog colony is evident. The park provides wildlife habitat that attracts many birds, including redtailed hawks and songbirds.

The 2006 Daniels Park Master Plan recommended the realignment and paving of Daniels Park Road to discourage unnecessary vehicular traffic through the park and to reduce erosion, dust, and sediment. The plan recommends improving park facilities including parking, park trails, and picnic sites. Work began in 2008 on the new road alignment and trails, a $6 million project funded by Douglas County.
Challenges and Opportunities
Daniels Park is the core natural area within a broader, regional complex of protected open space and wildlife habitat in Douglas County. The park offers an accessible rimrock setting that is not only unusual in its immediate area, but is also unusual along the Front Range. Daniels Park’s breathtaking scenery, role in the broader open space system, and diversity of park components (historic homestead, bison herd, memorial space) offer a unique experience. Lack of funding has prevented major restoration of the historic ranch and its potential reuse, interpretation, and access to the public.

Its location between growing suburban neighborhoods is generating a higher volume of fast-moving traffic and requests for more recreational use in the park. Views east from the park are now blocked by houses. Visitors are interested in more interpretation and access (such as pull-offs) to the bison and trails. A regional trail connection is under construction, but interest also exists in the development of internal trails. Those trails would require an interagency alignment and additional funding. Other park issues include vegetation trampling and social trails in concentrated public use areas. Party activity is a problem, as seen in the litter and broken glass.

Daniels Park Recommendations
A. Protect the unique character of Daniels Park by preserving its significant natural, cultural, and scenic resources.

- Preserve and protect the park’s unique mesa environment through careful siting of new improvements and through natural area restoration. Protect the park’s significant natural resources including the open mixed grassland prairie above the mesa rim and the canyons below.
- Preserve the open, expansive view that is unique to Daniels Park.
- Work with adjacent landowners to ensure that the designated open space lands remain so in perpetuity.
- Protect the unique cultural resources within Daniels Park including its historic patterns, buildings and features. Implement the recommendations in the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment.

B. Use the recommendations in the DMP Design Guidelines in the implementation of the Daniels Park Master Plan.

C. Work with other Douglas County agencies, other local organizations, and adjacent private property owners to preserve the open lands that surround Daniels Park.

D. Consider public access to the historic Florence Martin Ranch.
   - Consider developing a public use for the historic barn, house and garden, and the reconstructed gazebo.
   - Develop a comprehensive site plan for the core of the historic ranch for public access.
   - Continue the rehabilitation of the historic buildings and the historic landscape of the Martin Ranch. Implement the recommendations in the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment.

E. Continue working with the Tall Bull Council to ensure that the Council Memorial area has high quality natural and built resources.

F. Work with other agencies, organizations, and private property owners to create trails in and around Daniels Park.
   - Study possible alignments for an internal trail to connect park facilities and to offer more access to the park.

CHEROKEE FIRE
On October 29, 2003, the Cherokee Fire burned the western portions of Daniels Park at and below the mesa rim (as well as most of the landscape to the west of the park). Numerous burned pine trees dominate the landscape (providing good habitat for some bird species). The Gambel’oak communities that were burned are showing robust regrowth.
Picnic Parks

Bear Creek Picnic Parks
- Little Park
- Corwina, O'Fallon and Pence Parks
- Bell and Cub Creek Parks

Gateway Picnic Parks
- Fillius Park
- Bergen Park
- Turkey Creek Parks

Corwina Park Shelter

Picnickers along Bear Creek
In the early 1900s Denver began the task of building scenic drives through the foothills to access the mountain peaks and popular flowing streams just west of the city. With the growing popularity of the car, groups could venture out for the day, and Denver moved to acquire parkland along Bear Creek, Deer Creek, Turkey Creek, and Cub Creek. Denver also acquired parklands along the route to the Mt. Evans area. These were resting spots for picnicking, stops to fill a radiator, and gateways to the mountain beyond.

The curving, scenic drive of Highway 74 connects Morrison to Evergreen, providing access to some of the earliest and busiest Mountain Parks: Little, Corwina, O’Fallon, and Pence Parks. Cub and Bell Creek Parks are just south of Evergreen on the Bear Creek tributaries of Cub Creek and Little Cub Creek.

One of the more scenic routes was the road through steep mountain terrain to Mount Evans. Before reaching Squaw Pass Road (Highway 103), the early road extended through wooded hillsides in and north of Evergreen. Another route traveled southwesterly from Denver, turning west to follow North Turkey Creek. Along each of these roads, Denver built a picnic park as a gateway to western scenery. Along the northern route, the first picnic park was Fillius Park. Just a few miles to the west was Bergen Park, situated at the beginning of the long uphill journey to Squaw Pass and the Mount Evans area. Along the southern road, Turkey Creek Park served as the gateway.

The Picnic Parks are organized as the:

**Bear Creek Area Parks:**
- Little Park
- Corwina/O’Fallon/Pence Parks
- Bell and Cub Creek Parks

**The Gateway Parks:**
- Fillius Park
- Bergen Park
- Turkey Creek Park

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*The sky-line drive over Lookout Mountain drops ultimately into the cañon of Bear Creek, a famous trout stream, along which several of Denver’s millionaires have built summer homes. Shelters, fire-places, comfort stations and picnic grounds, provided with pure mountain water, occur at convenient intervals.*

—DMP brochure text, 1940s
Little Park is within a CNHP Potential Conservation Area. The steep canyons and ridges in the southern portions of the park are vegetated with Douglas-fir communities on north-facing slopes and ponderosa pine–mountain mahogany shrub communities on south-facing slopes. The quality of this pine-scrub association has warranted its designation as a CNHP Potential Conservation Area.
Little Park

**Background**

The 400 acres of Little Park, acquired in 1917, comprise the first mountain park encountered along the Bear Creek road west of Idledale. To the east of Little Park is Mount Falcon Park and to its west is Lair O’the Bear Park, both owned and managed by Jefferson County Open Space.

With its low meadows immediately adjacent to Bear Creek and its unique octagonal-roofed well house built in 1919, Little Park continues to offer a secluded serene spot for a day by the creek. South of Bear Creek, Little Park is characterized by steep canyons and ridges covered with ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests, open shrublands, and prominent rock outcrops.

This landscape is highly valued for its natural resources that continue into Mount Falcon Park to the south and east, designated as a natural area by Jefferson County Open Space. This value is also recognized by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP), which designated this area as a Potential Conservation Area for ponderosa pine and scrub woodland communities, located primarily on the upper slopes of the park.

In the mid-1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built a striking stone and log bridge crossing Bear Creek in a spot where many automobiles had forded Bear Creek. The foot bridge connected to two and a half miles of hiking trails built by the CCC for visitors to experience the steep mixed evergreen forest. The bridge was destroyed by a flood shortly after it was built, but remnants of the trail to the top of the peak where a “sweeping view over the hogback to Denver and the plains” still exists.
Challenges and Opportunities

The relationship between Little Park and Bear Creek Road has changed over the years. Little Park was originally immediately adjacent to Bear Creek Road. Today, Bear Creek Canyon Road is located several feet higher than the park, and the park entrance is skewed at an odd angle to the road. No highway sign marks the entrance. Visibility of Little Park and access into the park are challenging. Despite that, Little Park has a growing use as a parking area and trailhead for the multi-use trails in the adjacent Jefferson County Lair O’ the Bear open space park. Crowding has become an issue on weekends.

Little Park retains its original park-like qualities: it’s a quiet park, set close to Bear Creek’s flowing waters and is close to downtown Denver. Most of the Park’s original facilities remain, and it could easily be improved and upgraded for additional use for picnicking and stream access. Little Park’s setting offers park experiences that are similar to those that are hugely popular at O’Fallon Park. Without a bridge to cross the creek, however, no trail access exists to the rugged south side of the creek. With a few key improvements Little Park could offer an alternative site, relieving some of the overuse that occurs at O’Fallon Park. Safe ingress and egress from Highway 74, Bear Creek Canyon Road, is essential.

This role could greatly benefit the entire Denver Mountain Park system. Little Park also offers the opportunity to create additional accessible experiences with its fairly flat landscape and access to adjacent Lair O’ the Bear Park. Planning for Little Park needs input from Jefferson County because the two parks impact each other.
**Little Park Recommendations**

**A.** Develop a Management Plan for Little Park’s natural resources to protect its critically important habitat and significant plant communities.
- Little Park encompasses much of the Little Park Potential Conservation Area, as defined by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). The park is a great example of ponderosa pine communities, including mountain mahogany, and foothills ponderosa pine scrub woodlands. Management practices should include measures to protect these plant communities, including prescribed fire to enhance natural succession.
- Work with other agencies and organizations to restore Bear Creek.

**B.** Protect and restore riparian habitat in Little Park through appropriate site improvements that balance human use with the protection of the riparian habitat.
- Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected. Expand opportunities for fishing.
- Restore the stream edges and broad open meadows of the park’s lower elevations.

**C.** Work with adjacent landowners to protect the steep canyons and ridges of the ponderosa pine/scrub woodlands that are included in the CNHP Potential Conservation Area.
- Consider protecting the natural resources on surrounding private properties through conservation easements.

**D.** Upgrade Little Park’s physical infrastructure.
- Upgrade existing park facilities including improved parking, picnic areas, and restrooms.

**E.** Improve Little Park’s roads and park circulation including access points, internal roads, parking areas, and stream access.
- Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Little Park to address safe vehicular ingress and egress from Highway 74, defined parking, and improved picnic sites, restrooms, and access to park trails and the regional Bear Creek Trail.
- Reconfigure the parking area so that it is integrated with the rustic setting.
- Rehabilitate the historic stone well house for use as a shelter.

**F.** Restore the original hiking trail for hiking and stream access.
- Connect the original hiking only trail to the parking area.
- Consider rebuilding a bridge crossing near the location of the original bridge.

**G.** Collaborate with Jefferson County on all Little Park improvements to acknowledge the regional and cooperative nature of Little and Lair o’ the Bear Parks.
Corwina, O’Fallon and Pence Parks

“Our family has come to O’Fallon Park each year for over 30 years for our annual Memorial Day picnic.”

—Denver resident interviewed at O’Fallon Park, summer 2007

Background

The three Mountain Parks of Corwina, O’Fallon, and Pence Park embody the quintessential characteristics of the Denver Mountain Parks system—flowing water in natural creeks, backcountry forests, shaded picnic sites (big and small), and challenging trails. They also share boundaries, users, and acres of natural resources.

Martin J. O’Fallon’s 1938 donation of 860 acres is one of the last major additions to the DMP system. This donation connected Corwina Park on the creek with Pence Park to the south. Together the three parks comprise 1,487 acres of contiguous parcels. Most of the park acreage is open space that protects and sustains the natural resources including wetlands, riparian forest, open meadows, watershed, and evergreen forests. Except for Pence, the parks are directly on Bear Creek, attracting hundreds of weekend visitors.

O’Fallon and Corwina Parks each have beautiful, distinct stone structures that define their character. An iconic stone fireplace (missing its roof) is strategically sited to be seen from Bear Creek Canyon road and commemorates Mr. O’Fallon. A rustic stone rubble shelter on the southern hillside of the creek characterizes Corwina Park. Both parks also have developed picnic sites that are immediately adjacent to Bear Creek.

The land for Corwina Park was acquired in 1916 and its stone shelter was built in 1918. Corwina Park is a wonderfully wooded, small picnic park with an intimate scale. The park straddles Bear Creek and Highway 74, with small developed picnic areas on each side—Lower Corwina is the downstream park on the north side of
Corwina, O’Fallon and Pence Parks Recommendations

A. Manage the three parks as one natural resource area by creating a comprehensive and holistic management plan to preserve and protect the significant natural resources of the three parks.

- Work with other agencies and organizations to restore Bear Creek.
- Protect and restore riparian habitat in Corwina and O’Fallon Parks through appropriate site improvements such as designated parking, picnic sites, and points of access to Bear Creek. Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected as riparian habitat areas.
- Protect fishing access to Bear Creek in Corwina and O’Fallon Parks.

B. Challenges and Opportunities

O’Fallon Park is a very popular picnic destination, where social tradition and its easy stream access, numerous picnic sites, and network of hiking trails can attract more than 1,000 people on a warm weekend day. This level of use, particularly adjacent to and across the stream, is fragmenting sensitive wildlife habitat and deteriorating the stream and stream edges, creating erosion on adjacent slopes. Corwina faces similar impacts to the stream.

Social trails crisscross meadows and hillsides. Vertical trails extend into the hillsides above picnic sites, braided trails follow Bear Creek, and direct shortcuts connect to the designated hiking trails. Although some of the designated trails are signed, in general there is no clear indication which trails are official. The lack of clear wayfinding diminishes the usability of each park and contributes to the creation of new social trails.

In contrast, Pence Park has little use and is probably the least known of the three parks. Additional amenities and marketing could increase the popularity of this park.

Located astride Dix Saddle on Myers Gulch Road, the land for Pence Park, originally known as Dixie Park, was acquired in 1914. In 1937, a picnic site, a hiking trail, and Denver’s first sled run were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). A beautifully crafted hiking trail to Independence Mountain was built by the CCC in 1939. Denver and Jefferson County Open Space completed a multi-use trail segment from Pence through O’Fallon and Corwina to Lair O’ the Bear in the 2002.

Social trails and erosion at Corwina Park
B. Close the social trails adjacent to picnic sites in the three parks that are damaging the hillside and causing erosion.

- Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species, add signage and prevent access during revegetation.

C. Use conservation easements and acquisition to protect the Parks.

- Work with adjacent property owners at O’Fallon Park to acquire land or to obtain conservation easements for the land that bisects the northern edge of the park, the parcel immediately to the west of O’Fallon Park that connects to Parmalee Gulch Road, and the private inholding on Parmalee Gulch Road.
- Work with the property owner west of Pence Park to acquire a trail easement to access the upper portion of Independence Mountain.
- Consider obtaining a conservation easement to this land to protect Independence Mountain.

D. Rehabilitate Little, Corwina and O’Fallon Parks’ historic stone structures, historic picnic sites, and connections to Bear Creek.

- Continue implementing the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment recommendations for upgrading historic facilities for recreation use.

E. Upgrade Corwina Park’s physical infrastructure, including both Upper and Lower Corwina.

- Address safe vehicular ingress and egress from Highway 74 into both Upper and Lower Corwina Park.
- Upgrade existing park facilities including parking, picnic areas, and restrooms.
- Add a park trail to connect the two sites.

F. Improve the O’Fallon Park roads and park circulation including access points, internal roads, parking areas, and stream access.

- Improve the ingress and egress from Highway 74 to O’Fallon Park.
- Reconfigure parking areas for aesthetics and improved use.
- Upgrade the existing picnic areas with new shelters, trailheads, and associated parking.

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**BEAR CREEK**

The greater Bear Creek drainage has been nominated as an Important Bird Area (IBA), a designation that recognizes that a site provides essential habitat to one or more bird species during some portion of the year, including breeding season, migration, and/or winter.
**Bear Creek Trail**

The regional Bear Creek Trail traverses the upper ridges and meadows of O’Fallon and Corwina Parks, connecting with the northeast corner of Pence Park. Bear Creek Trail is open to all users and is a popular regional trail destination for mountain bikers, hikers, and trail runners.

G. Complete a Master Plan for Pence Park. Consider new picnic areas, shelters, trailheads and associated parking on the east and west sides of Myers Gulch Road.
   - Improve ingress and egress from Myers Gulch Road.
   - Reconfigure the existing picnic area in the western portion of the park, providing new amenities, such as a shelter, trailhead to Independence Mountain Trail, and a restroom.

H. Restore and expand the Independence Mountain Trail in Pence Park as a hiking-only trail.
   - Work with the property owner west of Pence Park to acquire a trail easement to access the upper portion of Independence Mountain.
   - Restore the CCC built Independence Mountain Trail in Pence Park from the new picnic site to the top of the mountain.

I. Develop trailheads at each park to access each park’s internal trail system and the regional Bear Creek Trail.

J. Collaborate with Jefferson County Open Space on all Corwina/O’Fallon/Pence Park improvements to acknowledge the regional and cooperative nature of those parks with Lair O’the Bear, which is managed by Jefferson County, and the Kittredge Playground, adjacent to O’Fallon.
   - Consider equestrian/hiking trails in some areas.
Bell and Cub Creek Parks

“Since Bell and Cub Creek Parks, as now named, lie adjacent to one another, with no natural division, they should be considered as one park and developed as such.”


Background
Upstream in the Bear Creek drainage are two mountain parks that sit quietly side by side protecting rolling ponderosa forests, mixed forested ridges, riparian habitat, and tributaries to Bear Creek. Bell Park is the eastern of the two Mountain Parks, consisting of 480 acres that frame the Little Cub Creek drainage. To its west is Cub Creek Park, a parcel of 549 acres of rolling forests that includes two prominent drainages, Cub Creek and Little Cub Creek.

Bell Park was set aside in 1915, and Cub Creek Park was acquired in 1922. In 1960, Denver dedicated 160 acres of Cub Creek Park to Frank C. Dillon. Together, these two mountain parks define the southern gateway into the Town of Evergreen.

Two major roads cross Cub Creek Park (Highway 73 and Brook Forest Road) and several graded dirt roads cross the park to access private land.

Bell and Cub Creek Parks share similar natural characteristics, including ponderosa pine forests and riparian communities along the creeks. Cub Creek Park’s open ponderosa pine forests are interspersed with open meadows and a robust woody riparian community along Cub Creek. An open meadow near the center of the park supports a small wet meadow community. Cub Creek’s picnic facilities are randomly placed tables and three prominent pull-offs for parking.

Bell Park supports Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine communities in the southeast corner of the park, and a narrow riparian community of limited woody vegetation and small wetland areas occurs along Little Cub Creek. Bell Park climbs steeply to wonderful views of the area and has no parking or recreation facilities. Although officially two distinct parks, they are managed as one open space.
Challenges and Opportunities
The diverse forested lands of Bell and Cub Creek Park that drain to two prominent tributaries to Bear Creek—Cub Creek and Little Cub Creek—offer the perfect setting for picnicking and its associated activities, such as informal games and short hikes. However, recreational use is limited in both parks.

Cub Creek Park offers limited picnicking along Brook Forest Road adjacent to Cub Creek, which are inaccessible during high water on the north side. Each park has several informal trails including some that extend into the surrounding residential area. No official trails exist in either park. Both parks are surrounded by residential subdivisions, and the delineation between private land and public park land is nonexistent. Cub Creek has several inholdings and a waste transfer station that is under consideration as a composting site. Dumping and vandalism are problems at both parks.

Bell and Cub Creek Parks Recommendations
A. Manage the two parks as one natural resource area by creating a comprehensive and holistic management plan to preserve and protect their significant natural resources.
   - Preserve and protect the natural resources of these two parks that provide a large tract of open space that is the visual gateway to downtown Evergreen, wildlife habitat in a developed forest setting, wetlands and wet meadows associated with small drainages, and riparian habitat.
Acquire privately owned properties within Cub Creek Park.

Clean up, monitor, and manage both parks to eliminate illegal dumping. Collaborate with EPRD, homeowners’ associations, and area schools for ongoing efforts.

Continue ongoing efforts and implement additional measures to manage litter to reduce the risk of conflicts with bears or other wildlife. Reconfigure trash cans or add bear-proof waste containers.

Control noxious weeds, particularly in wet meadow areas of Cub Creek Park.

Protect and restore riparian habitat through appropriate site improvements.

Develop site-appropriate measures to protect riparian habitat from concentrated public use areas. Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected as riparian habitat.

Recognizing that many visitors enjoy physical access to water, any habitat protection efforts should also include designated areas where access to the stream is appropriate.

Clearly identify Cub Creek and Bell Parks’ boundaries to control illegal dumping, off-road vehicle use, and other unauthorized uses.

Develop a boundary marking system that is compatible with the character of the DMP.

Close the social trails that are damaging the hillside and causing erosion.

Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.

Expand the role of Bell and Cub Creek as Bear Creek area picnic parks through appropriate improvements to vehicular access, picnic sites, and trails.

Develop a comprehensive site master plan for the two parks. Address safe vehicular ingress and egress from the roads, the development of defined parking and improved picnic sites along Cub Creek, and trails.

Assess possible use of the northern section of Cub Creek Park for EPRD joint use.

Work with Jefferson County Open Space and EPRD on regional trails along Cub Creek Road and Highway 73.

The Places of the Denver Mountain Parks: The Picnic Parks
Trail Recommendations for Fillius and Bergen Parks

Historic shelter at Fillius Park
Fillius Park

Background
Located immediately adjacent to Highway 74 on the way to Squaw Pass and Evergreen, the 107-acre Fillius Park was one of the early resting spots along the scenic drives in the Denver foothills. The park was acquired by Denver in 1914 and named for a member of the Denver Park Board, Jacob Fillius.

A prominently placed and distinctive stone shelter designed by J.J.B. Benedict was built in 1918. The shelter openings are on its north façade, as it is oriented toward views of the Continental Divide. The refined detailing of the shelter makes it one of the most important structures in the Mountain Parks system. In 1937, the Civilian Conservation Corps built two looping park roads for picnicking. Portions followed the original Bergen Park Road and the Beaver Creek Wagon Trail. A short hiking trail extends from the northernmost of these roads continuing along the original Beaver Creek Wagon Trail.

The park is divided by the Soda Creek Road, with the stone well-house, shelter, and picnic area to the southeast, set among ponderosas with little shrub or herbaceous understory. The steeper west portion has a meadow, mown for playing, picnic areas, and dense ponderosas and Douglas-fir woods. The park provides elk and mule deer habitat and winter range.

Challenges and Opportunities
Fillius Park continues to be an important gateway to the Mountain Parks and is a charming picnic and hiking spot. However, the growing community of Evergreen that surrounds Fillius Park on three sides is encroaching on its rustic natural character, diminishing the views and park experience. The south park boundary, Evergreen Parkway is a major vehicular route into the Town of Evergreen, and its traffic noise and activity detracts from picnic spots at the Fillius Shelter and along the park loop road.

“Forward thinking civic leaders correctly predicted that travel between Denver and the mountain areas to the west would be shortened by the advent of the automobile age, and that one-day roundtrip excursions to mountain park areas would soon become commonplace...”

Soda Creek Road bisects the park, separating the two picnic areas. Few visitors know of the western portion, which has only a small sign.

Fillius Park deserves restoration as an important Gateway Picnic Park. The buffering of the park from development and ways to safely connect the two park sections are needed to keep Fillius a premiere picnic spot as it has been. Restoration of its open meadows, rehabilitation of its site elements including the park road, completing a hiking trail loop, and buffering of adjacent uses are key. Its rustic shelter, ponderosa pine forest, open meadows, and easy hiking trails are those elements that are most desirable by picnickers in the DMP.

Fillius Park Recommendations

A. Rehabilitate the ponderosa pine forest and understory in the manicured portions of the park.
   - Consider alternate closing of the picnic sites to undertake extensive revegetation in areas that are trampled and eroded.
   - Develop site-appropriate measures to protect restored vegetation from concentrated public use areas.

B. Use conservation easements to create a buffer around Fillius Park.
   - Work with adjacent property owners to obtain conservation easements for those private properties that surround Fillius Park.

C. Close the social trails within the park that are damaging the forest and understory and causing erosion.

D. Close the meadow on the western section and no longer mow because its plant community is highly diverse and has integrity.

E. Reestablish Fillius Park as a gateway picnic spot.
   - Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Fillius Park that addresses safe vehicular ingress and egress, site rehabilitation, improved parking, restrooms, and a clear connection to the trail.
   - Rehabilitate the stone shelter picnic site and meadows for continued use as a picnic site. Reconfigure the parking area for aesthetics and improved use.
   - Create a naturalistic buffer or screen along Evergreen Parkway to improve the park experience.

F. Develop an internal trail system within Fillius Park.
   - Clearly identify, through signage and maps, the Beaver Creek Wagon Trail, while also closing, obliterating, and revegetating social trails.
   - Develop a hiking-only trail loop within the park to connect the picnic sites with the Beaver Creek Wagon Trail.
Background
At 25 acres, Bergen Park is one of the smaller mountain parks, but its open grasslands and mature ponderosa pine forest offer an exquisite wooded setting. Located at the base of the road to Squaw Pass at the crossroads of Highways 74 and 68, Bergen Park has served as a key resting spot and popular picnic ground since 1917. Built on land donated by Mr. Oscar N. Johnson in 1915, Bergen Park is consistently one of the most used mountain parks.

A striking stone shelter was built in 1917 in the center of the park. Built of white quartz and timber, the shelter is thought to have been designed by J.J.B. Benedict. A well house built of the same materials is located just south of the shelter. Bergen Parkway divides the park into two sections. A small monument commemorating the early settler Thomas C. Bergen is centered in the east section and an historic stone restroom, no longer in use, lies just to the south of the monument. The northern boundary of the park is an RTD Park-n-Ride. The regional Jefferson County Pioneer Trail runs along the western edge of the park. Buchanan Park, owned and in the process of being developed by the EPRD, abuts Bergen Park to the south. Plans include an internal trail connecting Buchanan and Bergen Parks together.

On warm days, Bergen Park is filled with families and groups of friends enjoying picnics in its ponderosa pine forest, especially near the shelter and well house. According to the 2006 survey, Bergen Park is one of the better known and used Denver Mountain Parks. Little activity takes place in the eastern section of the park.
Bergen Park is located in a high wildlife quality area as determined by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, providing elk and mule deer habitat and winter range. The park serves the area’s resident elk population as a winter concentration area, and is a refuge for herds crossing Highway 74.

Challenges and Opportunities
The context of Bergen Park, like Fillius, has changed dramatically in the past fifty years. Today Bergen Park is bisected by a local road, and roads define two of its edges. Commercial and residential development surround the park and traffic is steady. The EPRD serves almost 30,000 residents and owns less than 100 acres of parkland. Their new park, Buchanan Park, is in the process of being developed and will offer active recreation and a recreation center. Bergen Park remains a complement to this use but is impacted by growth. Today it truly is both an historic, regional picnic spot and a local community park.

Bergen Park still serves as an important public gateway to Squaw Pass Road. The relationship of Bergen Park to Buchanan Park offers an opportunity to partner with EPRD on physical connections, such as trails between the two parks and to access surrounding uses. At the same time, it will be important to balance the role that Bergen Park plays in protecting elk and mule deer habitat with providing traditional uses such as picnicking, especially for those needing a highly accessible park.

The arrangement of the park, between the two roads with the parking lot to the north, along with the joint use with Regional Transportation District (RTD), currently diminishes the park experience. Additional site issues include drainage that collects in the park, creating an ever expanding wet area and limiting picnic use. The quieter eastern area of the park could offer an opportunity to provide an additional picnic area and connecting trails. In many ways, Bergen Park also is the gateway to the Evergreen area and could provide opportunities to welcome visitors and interpret the area’s history.

Bergen Park Recommendations
A. Protect Bergen Park as the gateway to Squaw Pass by protecting its important natural resources including its ponderosa pine forest and grasslands.
   - Preserve and protect the park’s ponderosa pine forest that serves as open lands at the gateway and provides a view towards the west. Protect the forest as open space and do not increase development on the site.
   - Develop a plan for the rejuvenation of the ponderosa pine forest.
   - Do not allow active recreation.

B. Manage Bergen Park as a Natural Resource Area and as a complement to the active recreation in the adjacent Buchanan Park.
Create a comprehensive and holistic management plan to preserve and protect the park’s significant natural resources.

Work with other agencies and organizations to create a safe wildlife crossing from Bergen Park to Jefferson County’s Elk Meadow Park.

D. Expand the role of Bergen as a Picnic Park through appropriate improvements to vehicular access and picnic sites.

- Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Bergen Park to improve safe vehicular ingress and egress from Bear Creek Parkway, and provide parking at the existing picnic area.
- Consider developing an additional picnic area on the eastern section of the park to better accommodate numbers of users.
- Rehabilitate the Bergen Park shelter and well house structures and settings for continued use as picnic sites.

E. Collaborate with EPRD for an integrated internal trail and recreation use of both Bergen and Buchanan Park.

- Clearly identify designated trails, trailheads, and associated parking.
- Clearly identify appropriate park use and consistent rules and regulations.

F. Continue collaborating with EPRD to leverage the efforts of both agencies to provide passive recreation and natural resource protection.

- Starting with Bergen Park, investigate mutually beneficial cooperative maintenance programs, interpretive and volunteer programs.
- Collaborate on joint recreation assessments.
- Revise the existing Cooperative Agreement between EPRD and Denver to facilitate joint projects.
Turkey Creek Park

Background
Turkey Creek Park is strategically sited where North Turkey Creek meets South Turkey Creek and where North Turkey Creek Road meets Parmalee Gulch Road. It is probably the least known of all the Denver Mountain Parks. Since its construction in 1927 as the southern gateway into North Turkey Creek Canyon as part of the southern loop to the DMP, Turkey Creek Park has been a quiet roadside park with a wonderful, highly accessible riparian setting.

Turkey Creek Park straddles North Turkey Creek Road. Its lower elevations are primarily along the North and South Turkey Creek riparian corridors that are characterized by narrowleaf cottonwood and an understory of willows, grasses, and sedges. This riparian habitat dominates the eastern portion of the park. The park’s higher elevations, primarily west of the highway, consist of the steep hillsides above North Turkey Creek Canyon. These hillsides are dominated by ponderosa pine and shrubland communities.

An informal picnic area, with parking, picnic tables, and a restroom, is located adjacent to the riparian corridors under the canopy of mature cottonwood trees.

Challenges and Opportunities
Turkey Creek Park protects North Turkey Creek Canyon, providing an important view into the canyon and protecting its natural resources including the steep hillsides of ponderosa pine. The park setting, easy access to water, and its close location to Denver suggest expanding Turkey Creek Park’s role as a key picnicking site. With its level access and stream accessibility, the park could be developed especially for visitors with disabilities.

Improvements to the park are necessary to bring it to a level of standard that exists in other Denver Mountain Parks. Needed improvements include a more formalized picnic area and improved ingress and egress from the highway. Social trails and erosion of stream banks are problems. Internal park trails linking parking areas with picnic sites and stream access are needed.
Also, the suburban community that surrounds the park is encroaching on its natural character, diminishing the park experience. Buffering adjacent uses would help protect and elevate Turkey Creek Park as one of the Mountain Parks’ key picnic spots. In addition, the park boundaries are poorly defined, and dumping and other inappropriate activities are common.

**Turkey Creek Park Recommendations**

A. Protect Turkey Creek Park as the gateway to Turkey Creek Canyon by protecting its important natural resources including its ponderosa pine forest and riparian corridors.
   - Preserve and protect the park’s natural resources that serve as open lands at the mouth of the canyon. Protect the steep forested hillsides and riparian habitat associated with North Turkey Creek and South Turkey Creek.

B. Protect Riparian Habitat through appropriate site improvements that provide stream access in appropriate locations.
   - Create a few designated areas for public access to the streams where it is appropriate. Protect important riparian habitat from concentrated public use and identify areas that are appropriate for access.
   - Identify and close problematic social trails that damage wetland or riparian vegetation, cause significant erosion, and contribute to a larger proliferation of social trails.
   - Manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species, add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.

C. Expand the role of Turkey Creek Park as an accessible Picnic Park through appropriate improvements to vehicular access and picnic sites, and by adding new picnic facilities.
   - Develop a comprehensive site master plan emphasizing the park’s easy accessibility.
   - Improve vehicular ingress and egress from North Turkey Creek Road, and develop a defined parking area and improved picnic sites along North Turkey Creek and South Turkey Creek.
   - Improve the park entry and reconfigure the parking areas for aesthetics and improved use.
   - Create a formal picnic site with a restroom and a park shelter.
   - Improve the existing informal picnic sites and develop a park trail to connect them.

D. Clearly define Turkey Creek Park’s boundaries to control illegal dumping, off-road vehicle uses and other unauthorized uses.
   - Implement the DMP boundary marking system to identify the park’s boundaries, supporting enforcement efforts.
Background

Some of the most scenic and important lands in the DMP system were purchased for their open space value and were intended never to be developed. The prominent mountaintops, forested ridges, steep slopes of dense mixed evergreen forests, rocky outcrops, and narrow riparian corridors of Denver’s conservation/wilderness parks provide critical wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and dramatic scenic backdrops. Most of the highly visible peaks and ridges along the main routes west, including US 285, Highways 73 and 74 through Evergreen, and US I-70, that are not dotted with houses today are Denver Mountain Parks. Most are surrounded by private land that was purchased over the decades, which, as a result, has cut off or limited public access today. They continue to fulfill their original role—to protect the natural and scenic character of the Denver foothills.

Their permanent, protected role in the system was clearly intended. When Denver acquired land for these Mountain Parks, many deed restrictions were included in the transfer from government or private property to city ownership. For example, deed restrictions for more than 5,000 acres from USDA Forest Service Lands prohibit non-park activities or sale of the land—“that said city and county shall not have the right to sell or convey the land.” Other parks, such as those acquired from private ownership, restricted the land “for park and parkway purposes only.”

The protection of watershed and wildlife habitat is becoming increasingly important as the metropolitan region’s population grows and open space disappears. The Mountain Parks have land that contributes to the integrity of the region’s watersheds, notably Bear Creek, Clear Creek, and smaller tributaries, all of which eventually reach the Platte River.

“The acquirement of mountain parks was for the purpose of assuring perpetually to the residents of Denver the sublime scenery of the Rockies, the preservation of native forests and having for all time a pleasure ground in the mountains for the thousands of annual visitors to the city easily accessible.”

—Brochure introducing the Mountain Parks, 1913.
Conservation / Wilderness Areas

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<tr>
<th>Bear Creek Canyon</th>
<th>Forsberg</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bergen Peak</td>
<td>Hicks Mountain</td>
<td>Parmalee Gulch</td>
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<td>Berrian Mountain</td>
<td>Hobbs Peak</td>
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<td>Double Header Mountain</td>
<td>Mount Falcon</td>
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<td>Elephant Butte</td>
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<td>Fenders</td>
<td>Mount Lindo</td>
<td>West Jefferson School</td>
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<td>Flying J. Ranch</td>
<td>North Turkey Creek</td>
<td>Yegge Peak</td>
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View towards Evergreen Lake, Dedisse Park, Elephant Butte Tract, and Bergen Peak
View to Legault Mountain Tracts, Flying J Ranch Tract, West Jefferson School Tract, Berrian Mountain Tract, and Double Header Mountain Tract.
Large, open cliffs and rock outcrops are critical nesting habitat for many bird species, particularly raptors. These types of habitats support nesting sites for golden eagle, prairie falcon, and peregrine falcon, as well as smaller birds such as cliff swallow and black swift.

Some of the more significant examples of cliff habitat in the Mountain Parks are:

- Snyder Mountain Tract
- Hicks Mountain Tract
- Mount Judge Tract overlooking the upper Bear Creek valley
- Elephant Butte Tract
- Mount Lindo Tract, and the southern portion of Deer Creek Park
Many of the mountain ridges and peaks originally set aside for scenic quality provide important cliff habitat, including Snyder Mountain, Hicks Mountain, Mount Judge, and the southern portion of Deer Creek Park. Mountain peaks, streams and forested hillsides of these parks offer critical habitat for elk, mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, and mountain goat. The dense, mixed forests of Berrian Mountain provide important mountain lion habitat. Deer Creek Canyon Park provides severe winter range for elk, and Bergen Peak, Berrian Mountain, and Elephant Butte Tract support production (breeding) areas for elk. Mount Judge and Hicks Mountain provide overall range for mountain goats. Some of these conservation/wilderness parcels may be small or appear fragmented across the map, but in fact they were carefully selected and acquired with purpose.

A few of the conservation/wilderness areas in the DMP system are contiguous with other developed DMP or other public lands. In some places, DMP have hiking trails and other public access that complements adjacent parks such as DMP’s Bergen Peak adjacent to Jefferson County Open Space’s Elk Meadow.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

The conservation/wilderness parks of the Denver Mountain Parks system have continually upheld the values that were essential to the founding of the system in 1912 – to protect scenic resources for recreational, aesthetic, and environmental reasons, both for today and for the future. These parks were originally intended to be undeveloped lands in perpetuity. Their role in resource protection has become more important over the years, and as neighboring communities have grown, their role as a scenic background today is even more valuable.

These parcels face four primary challenges:

- Periodically they are threatened with sale, trade, or commercial use because of the lack of public understanding of their intended purposes and the legal protection they have.
- The Denver Mountain Parks system lacks natural resource management guidelines, basic inventories, and the staffing needed to monitor these areas.
- Problems such as vandalism, litter, dumping, and illegal cutting are increasing.
- As the population grows, a greater demand for recreation is being placed on open space, including these Conservation areas. Some Conservation/Wilderness areas may have the potential for new limited recreation uses and public access. However, they currently have no public access and have not been evaluated for impacts of recreation on the resources or budget implications. Access to these areas, if appropriate, will require regional cooperation and capital funding.

**Conservation/Wilderness Park Recommendations**

A. Preserve the majority of Conservation/Wilderness Parks as undeveloped Mountain Park lands.

- Preserve each park in its historic role as a scenic backdrop, as an important natural resource, or as both.
- Identify and close problematic social trails within the Conservation/Wilderness parks. Manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species, add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
- Engage private property owners, where their land abuts Denver’s land, in an informal stewardship role.

B. Manage similar or adjacent Conservation/Wilderness Parks as one natural resource unit by creating comprehensive management plans and system-wide policies to preserve and protect the significant natural resources.

- Identify those parks that are contiguous to one another and/or that share natural resource issues or attributes such as significant wetlands or rock outcrops.
Develop natural resource management plans for contiguous parcels, including other Denver Mountain Parks. Develop strategies to protect their shared natural resource attributes. Work with other open space agencies on lands that are contiguous.

Develop natural resource policies for the Conservation/Wilderness Parks.

C. Use conservation easements, trail easements, and acquisition to protect the parks.

   Work with adjacent property owners to acquire land or to obtain conservation easements for those properties that buffer or protect the conservation/wilderness areas from encroaching development.

D. Clearly define park boundaries to control illegal dumping, social trails, off-road vehicle use, and other unauthorized uses.

   Develop a marking system that is compatible with the rustic character of the Denver Mountain Park System.

   Add signage to clearly identify the conservation/wilderness parks as Denver Mountain Parks.

   Collaborate with other agencies on trails adjacent to or through (if appropriate) conservation/wilderness areas.

E. Evaluate potential new recreation uses.

   Study potential new recreation uses, such as rock climbing or new trails, evaluating whether access could be acquired, budget implications, and the impact of the use on natural resources.

   Collaborate with other agencies and stakeholders on developing and evaluating new recreation uses and, if appropriate, acquiring public access.